

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – 10 NOVEMBER 2016  
REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR (GOVERNANCE)

6/2016/1559/HOUSE

HOME FARM, 6 WHITEHILL, AYOT ST PETER, WELWYN, AL6 9AF

ERECTION OF TWO STOREY DETACHED ANNEXE FOLLOWING DEMOLITION OF EXISTING GARAGE

APPLICANT: Mr M Tant

(Welwyn West)

**1 Site Description**

- 1.1 The site is in open countryside and is a small historic farmstead comprising a farm house, barn and modern flat roofed garage. The house is a Grade II listed building and buildings within its curtilage at the time of listing (1983) will therefore be listed also. The original house was two storeys in height with a pitched roof with gable ends to both sides, hosting chimney stacks to each flank. The dwelling has since been extended with a two storey side extension at some point in the 1970's according to the design and access statement submitted. This fits with the timeline of the listing, which occurred on 09 December 1983, which references a "C19/20 1 window extension in keeping". There is no readily available record of planning permission for the two storey side addition. The barn has recently been extended and converted to residential use. The garage is rendered masonry, painted light pink, with fenestration design similar to the listed building.

**2 The Proposal**

- 2.1 The proposal involves the erection of a two storey barn following the demolition of the garage. The new barn would occupy the same footprint of the garage to be demolished. The barn would have a steep pitched roof with gable ends to either side. The south west facing elevation would host one three casement and one two casement window as well as one low level conservation roof light. The south east facing elevation would host two small windows at ground floor level. The north west elevation, facing away from the street, would host a wooden door, a small lean-to structure accommodating a boiler store and one medium sized low level conservation roof light. The north east facing elevation would host a high level, three casement ground floor window, with a larger two casement first floor window. The design in terms of materials and windows would match the converted barn slightly to the north.
- 2.2 A concurrent application for listed building consent for the works has been submitted separately (reference 6/2016/1560/LB).

**3 Reason for Committee Consideration**

3.1 This application is presented to the Development Management Committee because Welwyn Parish Council have objected to the proposal and the recommendation is to grant planning permission.

#### **4 Relevant Planning History**

4.1 Application Number: N6/1961/0045/ Decision: Granted Decision Date: 14 April 1961

Proposal: Pair of garages and cloakroom

4.2 Application Number: N6/1993/0036/FP Decision: Granted Decision Date: 08 March 1993

Proposal: Erection of a front entrance porch

4.3 Application Number: N6/2006/0334/FP Decision: Granted Decision Date: 02 November 2006

Proposal: Conversion and extension of barn to form residential dwelling and replacement of existing garaging

4.4 Application Number: N6/2007/1860/FP Decision: Granted Decision Date: 24 January 2008

Proposal: Erection of new gates and timber rail fence

4.5 Application Number: N6/2010/0847/FP Decision: Granted Decision Date: 24 December 2010

Proposal: Erection of two storey rear extension

4.6 Application Number: N6/2013/2380/FP Decision: Granted Decision Date: 15 January 2014

Proposal: Conversion and extension of existing barn to form a new dwelling (Internal and external alterations to previously approved application N6/2006/334/FP)

4.7 Application Number: N6/2013/2329/FP Decision: Granted Decision Date: 28 January 2014

Proposal: Erection of two storey rear extension, replacement of some windows and doors, new pitched roof and timber cladding to garage and new garden wall

4.8 Application Number: N6/2014/1266/FP Decision: Granted Decision Date: 31 July 2014

Proposal: Conversion and extension of existing barn to form a new dwelling

4.9 Application Number: 6/2016/0130/FULL Decision: Granted Decision Date: 07 April 2016

Proposal: Retrospective application for the change of use from dwellinghouse (C3) to sui-generis use comprising of dwellinghouse and guesthouse (C3/C1)

## **5 Planning Policy**

- 5.1 National Planning Policy Framework
- 5.2 Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005
- 5.3 Supplementary Design Guidance, February 2005
- 5.4 Supplementary Planning Guidance, Parking Standards, January 2004
- 5.5 Interim Policy for Car Parking Standards and Garage Sizes, August 2014

## **6 Site Designation**

- 6.1 The site lies within the Parish of Welwyn as designated in the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

## **7 Representations Received**

- 7.1 None.

## **8 Consultations Received**

- 8.1 **Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council Conservation Officer** – originally objected principally because the proposed structure was much taller than the existing garage competing visually with the listed house close by and also citing a number of design criticisms. Following submission of amended plans which have reduced the height of the structure and the extent of internal accommodation the conservation officer now has ‘no objection’.

## **9 Parish Council Representations**

- 9.1 Welwyn Parish Council has objected with the following response:

*“This is a major development in the green belt and we would ask the planners to take full consideration that this may form an independent dwelling contrary to green belt policy”*

## **10 Analysis**

- 10.1 The main planning issues to be considered are: Whether the proposal
  1. **Represents appropriate development within the Green Belt (NPPF and RA3)**
  2. **Preserves the setting of the listed buildings (NPPF)**
  3. **Features high quality design which incorporates the design principles of the District Plan and Supplementary Design Guidance and respects and relates to the character and context of the area, as a minimum maintaining and where possible enhancing or improving the character of the existing area (NPPF, GBSP2, D1)**
  4. **Respects and maintains the amenity of adjoining occupiers (D1)**
  5. **Highway and parking matters (NPPF and M14)**

## **1. Represents appropriate development within the Green Belt (NPPF and RA3)**

- 10.1 An objection has been received from Welwyn Parish Council on Green Belt grounds, alongside a request that full consideration be given to the possibility of this forming an independent dwelling contrary to Green Belt policy. The application forms confirm the proposal is a residential extension/annexe and not an independent dwelling. A planning condition may be imposed which will require the building to be used only as an annexe ancillary to the occupation of the main house. If the applicants were to want to use the building separately as an independent dwelling then planning permission would be required, and an assessment of the impact of the intensification of the use of the site in terms of an additional separate dwelling would take place.
- 10.2 Policy RA3 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan (2005) outlines that extensions to dwellings, including those outbuildings for which planning permission is required, must not represent disproportionate increases over the size of the original dwelling and not have an adverse visual impact on the character, appearance and pattern of development of the surrounding countryside. More recent advice contained in the NPPF states that the extension or alteration of a building may be appropriate development in the Green Belt “provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building”.
- 10.3 The original dwelling has been extended by way of a two storey side extension in 1956 which added approximately 30sqm of footprint. The original dwelling had a footprint of approximately 98sqm, and as such, the addition of 30sqm of footprint from the two storey extension represents a 30% increase of the dwelling. In terms of floor space, the original dwelling had a floor space of approximately 196sqm (ground, first and second floor - excluding the dormer as it is not clear whether the dormer was built prior to 1948). The two storey extension in 1956 thereby resulted in an increase in floor space of approximately 30%. The garage as it exists added a further 38sqm resulting to date in an approximately 50% cumulative increase in floor space.
- 10.4 The 1960's garage is to be demolished as a part of the proposed development and its replacement would result in an additional 67sqm of floor space, resulting in a cumulative 65% increase over the size of the original dwelling. Floor space is not a definitive measurement of disproportionate additions, but is a good starting point. In terms of volume increase, it is considered that, based on the form and bulk of the additions, such calculations would not result in a vastly different increased percentage, however it is accepted that the increase in volume would be slightly less as the additional floor space proposed would be accommodated within a pitched roof. Considered independently of any other consideration, the calculations above indicate cumulative disproportionate increases to the original dwelling. As such, the proposed development is considered inappropriate within the green belt and therefore is by definition harmful and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.
- 10.5 The extant permission for a two storey extension to Home Farm and a new pitched roof and timber cladding to the garage is a material consideration in terms of the impact of the proposed development on the Green Belt. The proposed additions were previously allowed as inappropriate development with very special circumstances cited as being significant benefits to the character and setting of the listed building. The extant permission can still be implemented.

- 10.6 The difference in terms of built form between the development now proposed and the extant permission to add timber cladding and a pitched roof to the garage would not be significant. The boiler store would represent a small addition in terms of floor space, and the ridge height of the pitched roof would be approximately 1m higher than that already approved and extant.
- 10.7 As the primary purpose of the Green Belt is to maintain openness, which is best defined as the absence of built form, it is considered that the minimal increase in height of the new barn and small boiler room would not increase the built form to the extent where the development could be reasonably considered to result in a greater impact on the Green Belt sufficient to warrant a refusal on this basis.
- 10.8 Summarising the above, the proposed development would disproportionately increase the size of the dwelling and is therefore considered harmful to the Green Belt, however, a similar increase has already been granted planning permission and this permission remains extant. This fall-back position in terms of alterations to the existing garage, is considered a very special circumstance in the consideration of this proposed development. It is considered that the modest difference between the extant fall-back position and proposed development in terms of additional built form is not very significant, and as such, the very special circumstance is considered to outweigh the limited harm of the proposed development in terms of Green Belt policy.

## **2. Preserves the setting of the listed buildings (NPPF)**

- 10.9 Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 sets out that, *“in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.”* This special regard is set out within part 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 10.10 Paragraph 128 of part 12 of the NPPF indicates that the applicant should describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by the proposed development. The design and access statement submitted lists the planning history of the site and quotes the listing entry. Beyond this, there is no assessment of the significance of the heritage asset, in this case represented by the Grade II listed building.
- 10.11 Paragraph 129 of the NPPF continues to state that *“local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal ... taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise”*. In this light, the Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council Conservation Officer responded to a consultation objecting to the original proposed barn on the basis of height and design matters. Following negotiation and the receipt of amended plans, the objection was withdrawn and the conservation officer now considers the amended proposal is acceptable in terms of its impact on the significance of the heritage asset.
- 10.12 The amended design is now improved in terms of its height relative to the principle listed building (Home Farm) and the curtilage listed, recently renovated and extended, barn. The height and form of the proposed barn is now similar in

terms of bulk to the previously approved works comprising timber cladding and erection of pitched roof above the existing garage (N6/2013/2329/FP). The fenestration detailing within the proposed barn has been reduced. The materials would reflect those used in the curtilage listed barn within the site, and would relate to the historic character of Home Farm as a farmstead. The height of eaves now relates well to the principal listed building, and while the roof would be more substantial in height, this difference would not be highly visible to the extent to harm the significance of the heritage asset.

- 10.13 The amended design is now considered to be of good quality that would reflect the curtilage listed barn and remain subservient and relate sufficiently well to the principal listed building.
- 10.14 A further consideration in the assessment of the significance of harm to the setting of the listed buildings is the removal of the existing 1960's flat roofed garage structure. The existing garage is of poor quality in terms of its rendered masonry painted light pink and blue window frames, and the removal of this harmful addition as a part of the proposed development affords some positive weight in favour of the proposed development.
- 10.15 Taking the above considerations into account, it is considered that the proposed replacement building/barn would preserve, and to a small extent, enhance, the setting of the listed building.

### **3. Features high quality design and respects and relates to the character and context of the area**

- 10.16 Policies D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework, alongside the Supplementary Design Guidance sets out the requirement for high quality reflective design which respects the character and context of the area.
- 10.17 The site contains the primary listed building, which hosts a pitched roof with gable ends, with a small front dormer, and exposes brick external materials and tiled roof and Georgian style fenestration detailing. The site also contains a curtilage listed barn, which has been recently renovated, extended and is permitted to be used for a mix of residential and holiday let.
- 10.18 A recent development has taken place to the rear of the host site containing modern dwellings with a higher density than the surrounding area however the surrounding area is best characterised by dispersed detached properties on generous plots with outbuildings and barn style buildings visible within most sites. There is also a set of terraced buildings within Whitehill which also maintain an open and rural character.
- 10.19 Negotiations during the course of the application have secured a development now considered appropriate adjacent to the listed building in terms of scale, appearance and use of materials. Overall, the presence of a barn structure of this quality design does sufficiently reflect the existing curtilage listed barn while relating well in terms of scale and height to the principal listed building.
- 10.20 The plot would retain its historically rural, agricultural character as a detached property within a spacious plot, it would maintain the character of the host dwelling, curtilage listed barn and surrounding area.

#### **4. Respects and maintains the amenity of adjoining occupiers**

- 10.21 Due to the spacious nature of the site, and the location of the building within the plot, it is not considered that the development would cause harm to adjoining residential premises or the converted barn in terms of loss of light, dominant form or impact on privacy.

#### **5. Highway and parking matters**

- 10.22 There is sufficient on-site parking for 9 vehicles. This is considered to be ample provision for the size and use of the resultant buildings on site. There are no proposed changes in terms of access to the site.

#### **Conditions**

- 10.23 Planning Practice Guidance governs the use of conditions in planning and the power to impose conditions when granting planning permission. If used properly, conditions can enhance the quality of development and enable many development proposals to proceed where it would otherwise have been necessary to refuse planning permission. The objectives of planning, however, are best served when that power is exercised in such a way that conditions are clearly seen to be fair, reasonable and practicable. Conditions should only be imposed where they are both necessary and reasonable, as well as enforceable, precise and relevant both to planning and to the development to be permitted. In considering whether a particular condition is necessary, both officers and members should ask themselves whether planning permission would have to be refused if that condition were not to be imposed. If it would not, then the condition needs special and precise justification.
- 10.24 It is reasonable to require the development to be constructed in accordance with the revised plans and from suitable high quality materials that match the existing dwelling.

#### **11 Conclusion**

- 11.1 The proposal has been considered in terms of its appropriateness in the Green Belt, its impact on the significance of the setting of the heritage asset, the character of the area, the amenity of existing and future occupiers and parking matters. For the reasons outlined above, it is considered that subject to conditions that the proposal is acceptable.

#### **12 Recommendation**

- 12.1 It is recommended that planning permission be approved subject to the following conditions:

1. The development/works shall not be started and completed other than in accordance with the approved plans and details:

2016-21-PL-001 & PL002 & PL003 & PL004 & 1:1250 Site Location Plan received and dated 04 August 2016 & PL101 Rev A & PL102 Rev A & PL103 Rev A & PL104 Rev A received 11 October 2016.

REASON: To ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans and details.

2. No development shall take place until samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the building hereby granted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be implemented using the approved materials and subsequently, the approved materials shall not be changed.

REASON: To ensure a satisfactory standard of development in the interests of visual amenity in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policies D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

3. The extension/building hereby permitted shall not be occupied at any time other than for purposes ancillary to the residential use of the dwelling known as Home Farm, Whitehill, shown on the submitted application plans.

REASON: in order to clarify the terms of this permission and to avoid the creation of an unjustified independent unit of residential occupation outside of any established settlement in an area of generally open countryside contrary to the aims of the NPPF and Policy GBSP2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

#### POSITIVE AND PROACTIVE STATEMENT

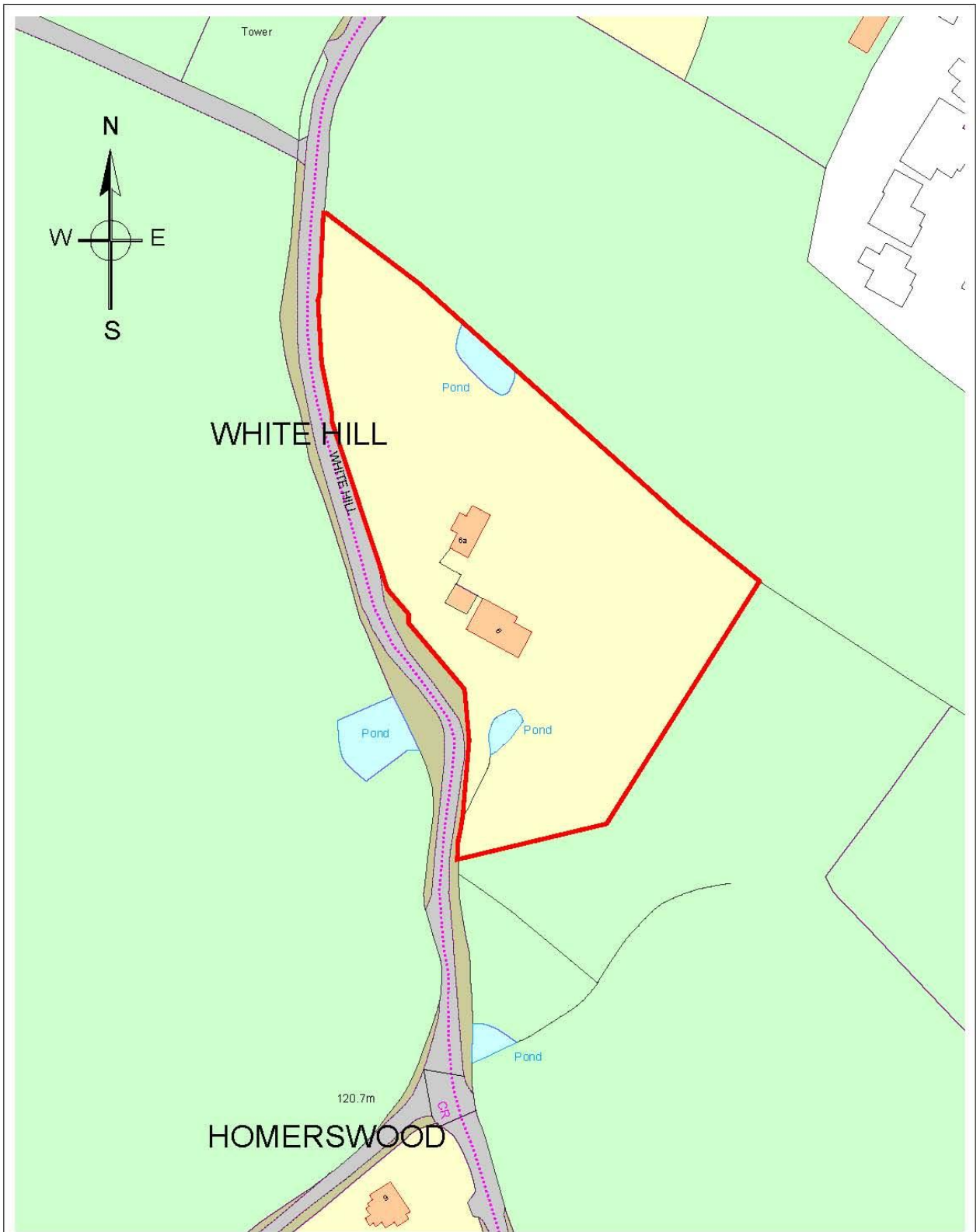
The decision has been made taking into account, where practicable and appropriate the requirements of paragraphs 186-187 of the National Planning Policy Framework and material planning considerations do not justify a decision contrary to the development plan (see Officer's report which can be viewed on the Council's website or inspected at these offices).

Sam Dicocco, (Strategy and Development)

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> October 2016

Expiry Date: 29 September 2016





Council Offices, The Campus,  
Welwyn Garden City, Herts. AL8 6AE

Title:

Home Farm 6 Whitehill Ayot St Peter Welwyn

Scale: **DNS**

Date: **2016**

Project:

**DMC Meeting**

Drawing Number:

**6/2016/1559/HOUSE**

Drawn:

**Baras Mast-Ingle**

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